

## Jordan Valley Inter-Agency Project (JVIP)

In a February 1998 meeting, United States Forest Service Director Mike Dombeck, National Park Service Director Robert Stanton and Bureau of Land Management Director Patrick Shea, made plain their concerns that overgrazing, aggressive logging, and the invasion of noxious weeds are the three biggest threats to our nation's refuge lands.

In April of 1998, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt called for a national strategy to control the spread of noxious weeds. Farmers' and ranchers' annual crop and range losses top \$7 billion.

In February 1999, President Clinton signed an executive order to create a national strategy against invasive species.

Realizing that the state highway system is one of the major conduits for spreading noxious weeds and recognizing the economic damage to our customers and stakeholders adjacent to our highway system, an inter-agency approach was developed in the spring of 1998 to address the problem. A partnership of state, county and federal agencies was formed as a proactive approach to control the growth and invasiveness of noxious weeds in the southern part of Malheur County. The project area covered by the partnership is approximately 3,686,000 acres in size (3,013,000 Bureau of Land Management) and has approximately 1,000 centerline miles (250 Oregon Department of Transportation and 750 Malheur County).

The Bureau of Land Management, the Oregon Department of Transportation, and Malheur County, aware that all three agencies were operating noxious weed eradication programs in a large area of south Malheur County, developed an inter-governmental agreement to combine the three programs under one management spray and re-seeding program. It was felt that combining the programs would not only increase efficiency, but allow better tracking of noxious weed sites, and re-vegetative filter strips in the right-of-way. Re-establishing this type of vegetation also reduces the amount and frequency of herbicide application as less will be needed. Oregon Department of Transportation has drill-seeded 300 miles of state and county right-of-way.

Due to the extreme travel distances by these agencies, it was felt that a partnership also would generate a saving for all parties. Jordan Valley is the staging area and a local ODOT employee is the spray applicator for all three agencies, with each agency contributing one-third of his wages; materials are also shared.

The spray equipment is state of the art and computerized to apply the correct herbicide, regulate the amount and record the dosage. In addition, the project includes funding to restore the roadside to be environmentally responsible for controlling invasive weeds, and reduce pollutants from entering the watershed from the road surface. This is of particular importance to comply with the "Oregon Plan" (Fish Recovery Program) as Malheur-Owyhee watershed drains to the Snake River. Hot spots of weeds are mapped by Global Positioning System for future remedial spraying, and an on-board computer records herbicide volumes.

A board of directors and an Operations Committee that includes local farmers, ranchers, and University of Oregon faculty, Oregon Department of Wildlife, as well as the partnering agencies oversees the project. (See attached organizational chart)

Several other geographic areas in Oregon have expressed interest in developing a similar project for combating the noxious weed problems in their jurisdictions. It is expected that the Jordan Valley project will continue indefinitely.

## **PROJECT GOALS**

1. Reduced costs
2. Reduce herbicide use
3. Improve weed control efficiency
4. Improve condition of right-of-ways
5. Improve water quality
6. Coordinate efforts
7. Eliminate duplication of efforts (personnel and equipment
8. Eliminate long distance travel to job site
9. Use of state-of-the-art equipment
10. Early treatment of small sites
11. Reduce overland flow of water
12. Stabilize / filter soil particulate
13. Reduce / eliminate potential of pesticides entering the watershed

## **PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### **Goals – 1, 2, 3, & 4**

Prior to 1998, the Oregon Department of Transportation's annual costs, and those of Malheur County, for weed treatments on the shoulders and medians of state and county roads were in excess of \$100.00 per shoulder mile. The Bureau of Land Management's costs exceeded \$120.00 per acre. With the implementation of the new program, all cost of equipping staff have been recovered within a two year period; ODOT and Malheur County costs per shoulder mile have decreased to approximately \$33.20 per shoulder mile and BLM's costs have been reduced to \$38.00 per treated acre, while there has been an approximate ten fold increase in the number of sites treated by all agencies. Treated sites now require followup spot treatment only for singular weed infestations, and are tracked via the GIS program that is built into the spray truck.

### **Goals – 3, 5, 11, 12, & 13**

By establishing vegetation within the right-of-way, overland flow of water and soil particulate has been reduced by an estimated 60%. Because of the competitive nature of the seeded vegetation, noxious weed establishment has been greatly reduced and in many instances, eliminated entirely. This has reduced substantially the use of pesticides along the right-of-way and markedly decreased potential water contamination.

### **Goals – 1, 6, 7, & 8**

Prior to the inception of the project in 1998, Malheur County, ODOT and BLM were all spraying noxious weeds in the same geographic area for a period of at least 3 months each year. After initiation of the project, actual travel costs for crews were reduced from \$11,520.00 to \$0, because the staff lives at the job site. Commuter time prior to 1998 was approximately 200 miles a day for each of the three agencies.

Chemical and application costs, while initially increasing in total numbers, reduced per mile and per acre costs by approximately two-thirds, and within 2 years has completely paid for the cost of the equipment. Seed costs, gas and other materials and supplies costs initially increased due to our ability to treat many more sites, and we have chosen to continue to expand the area we treat rather than cut back the total dollar commitment to the program.

### **Goals – 1, 3, 6, & 9**

The state of the art equipment was developed by the partnership. The vehicle has been modified and equipped, and all vehicle costs are borne by the BLM. Malheur County and ODOT partnered to jointly purchase a spray tank and associated spray equipment. Chemical and seed costs are borne by the using agency. ODOT provides the staff and supervision.